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[561] the society during a public consecration which she receives with several others, the group forming an age grade.

After an apprenticeship of seven days, the potters decide upon the date of the ceremony which is celebrated at the firing spot near the altars. Each member provides a hairpin (bandigi), which represents her on this occasion, and the skin of a hedgehog. Disrobed in front of the assembled villages, each girl is seated in turn on the altar as an aged woman examines her genitals to verify her virginity and the proper execution of the excision.

/126/ If the young girl is no longer a virgin, she is publicly de-
[831] clared dangadè (literally, bastard) and finds herself automatically excluded from the society; she will never be able to receive the potter's title. Otherwise, a proclamation is made immediately to the great joy of the public. If the excision has not been judged
[304] sufficient, the patient is given the title of potter after having submitted to a new operation performed in such a way that the blood runs over the pottery (1).

1. If excision is not possible, the operation takes the form of a wound inflicted with the hedgehog's skin (see p. 243).

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867 An old woman then appears seated before members of the age grade and instructs them. She tells of the origin and history of pottery, apprising them of the difficulties of the craft such as fatigue, burns, etc. She teaches them patience towards the client and enumerates the rules which will have to be observed during their lifetime: to be pure in heart and to hate no one; not to undertake work shortly after having had sexual relations; to work in silence; to respect all taboos in general.

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431 She then makes a libation of karite oil on the altar and rubs it on the bodies of the initiates who must run their tongues over the pottery, thus making an oath. Sheep, brought by the initiates' parents, are then killed by having their throat cut over the hearth in the name of the potters while the elders of the society present to the initiates gifts consisting of several pots which they will sell for profit while waiting for their first work. This gift is moreover a sign of adoption.

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784 The utensils are made with clay, mbogo pasa, taken from the bottom of the watercourse or along the river's edge; they belong to

194 The candidates next swear an oath the text of which is recited by the chief:

"If I reveal (the secrets of) the boli, may it kill me; if I disclose the institutions, may they kill me; until my death, if I speak, may my father die, may my mother die, may the boli break my heart" (1).

1. Ni nye korobo, boli ka fa, ni nye korobo, dyow ka fa, fo kata n sa ni nya fo n fa ka sa m ba ka sa, boli dyugu ka sõ ta.

Each in his turn, the children next lick the head and the hooks of the mask three times, thus assuring it their allegiance: "Until my death, I shall not reveal the koli. Faro has not been revealed! Let the koli not be revealed!" (1)

1. Fo ka ta n sa nte korobo koli, faro ma korobo, koli kana korobo.

After the altars, including the pembele, have been presented to [182] them, the postulants drink the blood of a goat offered in sacrifice; thus they assimilate the forces of the Komo and by this communion consecrate their oath.

Finally, the mechanism of the society in all its details is explained to them: the necessity of hierarchy in age grades, of respect for taboos, and of the secrecy in which all that concerns the organization must be held. A moral lesson is also taught them; in particular they [867] are advised to set themselves a line of conduct in private life as well as in public life, to be righteous, to avoid duplicity and bad faith, flãvlãña (literally, double action), never to serve two masters, and not to entertain conflicting desires among themselves.

194 As an illustration, the adventures of the first members who broke 773 these laws are told.

539 One of Makanta Djigui's companions, Garou Keita, was afflicted with this serious fault. He had become friendly with Moridje Sidibé, son of the famous Soma Moriba Sidibé, who had the same character. At this period three great Komo were already functioning in the region: thàt of Koulikouro called selo (literally, grave); that of Nyamina called dyibi (literally, dark); and that of Kankan.

Garou went to one of the ceremonies of the Komo of Kankan /156/ and by telling lies, incited the members to revolt against the local

212 by numbers, and notably by ten, which may be obtained, among
801 other ways and if it's a question of representing the Creator, by adding the first four numbers, or by adding the number five to
[776] itself." Ten is the numerical symbol of Faro (god of water); it symbolizes what is just, true, perfect, and complete.

The symbolism of numbers is used in divination: a first
[787] group of eight signs, called the secret count, reproduces the seven first numbers which, according to a Bambara myth, were engraved in space at the instant that the Creator by his word formed the universe. They contain the whole universe.

These numerical signs were ritually traced on the most varied occasions.

[802] Finally, we must note the existence of the sign for "nothing," fu gundo, zero, which stands at the beginning of a series of 196 numerical signs used by those who practice arithomancy.

The word Mandé, of central significance for 44 peoples, may be interpreted, according to some, as manin (the secret name for ten), number of unity and of the cultural community.

F. Writing

212 For everyday use, the Bambara have adopted arabic characters, called by them "writing of the Blacks." In fact, only those who have studied in the Marabouts' schools know how to read or write them. No written literature, properly speaking, exists. A
538 large store of traditions, epics, tales, legends, songs, and proverbs is transmitted orally from generation to [17] generation by professional storytellers, the griot. Moreover, the whole sum of sci-
867 entific, juridical, ethical, and practical knowledge is taught orally
868 in the course of daily life or during long years of initiation. Certain old masters renowned for their learning are consulted from far distances when a chief is in doubt on a point of tradition.

212 Nevertheless, signs do exist for a secret writing that the priests, the heads of families, or blacksmiths draw on the sanctuaries, on masks, furniture, clothing, cabin walls, or in the sand.

212 For the Bambara, things exist by signs. These signs have at-
812 tached themselves to things, calling them to consciousness and to the attention of man.

844 Before delivery of her child, a woman is advised to pound grain. When the labor pains come, the woman retires to her hut with several matrons (men are not allowed access). If the child is poorly presented, the priest is called. He performs outside the hut, simulating the delivery and chanting the formulas that ease labor. To deliver the infant, the woman kneels with her hands thrown behind her, while the midwife supports the small of her back. At birth the infant's shoulders must touch the ground; this is the moment when he receives his spiritual principles. The infant is washed several times and smeared with karite butter.

846 853 854 The mother must not go out during the first eight days after the birth; she must devote herself entirely to the new-born. She massages his head daily in order to give it a more rounded form, and she pinches his nose. She nurses the infant for the first two years, then the weaned child passes directly to the communal calabash. Until the child can walk, the mother carries it astraddle on her back with the aid of a loincloth knotted at her chest. In this manner the infant accompanies the mother everywhere, to work as well as to the dance. 868 It is during these intimate contacts that the mother teaches her child to talk. Later, the little girls stay with their mothers who teach them all the domestic arts, while the boys are educated in outside work. [867] During their childhook they are taught the usages and rules of deportment: a woman knows she must never shake the hand of a man to 201 greet him, and, if he extends his hand, she flings up her arm "as a 576 sign of not being interested." A man will salute his superior by extending his hand palm upwards, and the superior will put his over it; inversely, when a man greets an inferior he extends his hand with the palm down, while for an equal his hand will be perpendicular to the ground. If a man must ask someone's pardon, he puts his hands behind his back to simulate the tail of an animal (for he has acted like an animal). Crossing the hands in front of or upon the head is a sign of sadness. To mark his submission to a king, a man puts his right elbow to the ground. To pray to God, the two hands are extended with the palms turned [89] outward. A woman learns that it is im- 576 pudent to question her husband during the day, and when she speaks 593 of him, she says koke, that is, big brother, for she cannot pronounce 833 his name or in any way recall the bonds which exist between them. It is only during the two consecutive nights that she couples with him